

Managing a disclosure

Remember the safety equation

CHOICE	CONTROL	TIME LIMIT
The person disclosing has chosen to talk with someone	The person disclosing has control over what they say	The person disclosing can decide how long it will last

1. Safe spaces

Aim: the child or person disclosing feels safe and you recognise their right to feel safe. The child or person disclosing feels that they can talk to someone (you) about anything.

- Move to a safe space where the person disclosing feels comfortable and is free from distractions.
- Avoid reacting with shock, horror, or fear about anything said. A child may interpret your reaction as you being shocked and horrified by them and they may shut down. Alternatively, the person disclosing may feel protective towards you and stop talking out of fear of upsetting you more.

Aim: the person disclosing will know they have your full attention.

- Be calm and patient.
- Listen intently and supportively.

Aim: allow the child or young person or the person disclosing time to gather thoughts and to speak using their own words.

- Sit and be “present” with the person disclosing in supportive manner.
- Be calm and patient and allow the person disclosing to lead (*control*) the conversation.
- Remember the safety equation.

2. Using the language of safety

Aim: for the person disclosing to tell the story in their own words.

- Always believe the **person disclosing**.
- Listening supportively is more important than what you say.
- Listen to the child or person disclosing - do not ask lots of questions.
- Limit questions to the following and only if necessary - when working with children, remember you only need enough information to form a reasonable belief that a child is being abused to report. The department will have trained interviewers and investigators to gather all the information.
 - What happened?
 - When did it happen?
 - Who did it?
 - How do you know this person (only if unclear)?

2. Using the Language of Safety (cont.)

Aim: for the child or person disclosing to feel safe and valued.

- a. Thank the child or the person disclosing for telling you.
- b. Avoid interrupting the child.
- c. Refrain from asking them to retell or back-track the story.
- d. Reassure the person disclosing they have done nothing wrong and this is not their fault and that you believe them.
- e. Do not be judgemental .
- f. Be mindful to avoid “blaming” questions such as:
 - Why didn’t you stop it?
 - What were you doing there?
 - Why didn’t you runaway?
 - Why did you not tell me sooner?
 - What were you doing to make this happen?
 - What could you have done to stop it?
 - Are you sure you are telling me the truth?

3. Act

Aim: The person disclosing has knowledge and understanding over what will happen next.

- a. Do not tell the person disclosing you will keep it secret or make any other promises that are outside of policy or law. This is integral if the person disclosing is a child or their may be risk of harm to themselves or to others
- b. Let the person disclosing know what you are going to do next.

Aim: The person disclosing feels safe and has choice and control over what they will do next.

- a. Once the disclosure conversation has settled, be sure to ask the person if they would like to sit for a while, with or without you, or if they would like to join in a group or participate in solo activity.

Aim: To follow legislative and workplace processes.

- Write down conversations verbatim (if possible) as well as what prompted the conversation or disclosure and document.
- Follow workplace protocols.
- Follow mandatory reporting process.

Aim: Self Care and Self Awareness.

- Be mindful of your own feelings, thoughts and behaviours.
- Seek guidance and support from your workplace (remember confidentiality)
- Professional counselling may be required.

Reporting

Reporting in all Australian states and territories

You can find out more about Mandatory Reporting requirements throughout all Australian states and territories. Details are available at: <https://aifs.gov.au>